



I was pleased to welcome members of the Cheshire High School girls swim team—winners of 235 consecutive meets and counting—to the State Capitol for Opening Day ceremonies of the 2008 General Assembly.

## AID FOR OUR TOWNS

### 13th District Education Funding on an Upward Trend

\$59,716,635 \$64,052,861 \$64,502,105 \$66,399,844 \$69,136,814 \$69,388,650 \$78,386,181 \$81,835,173

*As your state Senator I've strived to increase education funding to our district. I'm pleased to say that over the last seven years, education cost sharing funds from the state have increased by 37 percent!*

FY 2002 FY 2003 FY 2004 FY 2005 FY 2006 FY 2007 FY 2008 FY 2009\*

\*Projected

**This year Meriden received** significant state funding to help underwrite important local projects. State bonding for \$100,000 was added to nearly twice that amount of private funding to construct Noah's Arc of Hope, a barrier-free playground in Hubbard Park. The state also helped pay for new signs and fresh paint on the Hubbard Park footbridge over I-691. The city's public schools are better and safer as a result of state funding, too. Wilcox Technical High School receive funding for critical HVAC improvements, and a special school security grant was received by the district to ensure all students, faculty, and staff are as safe as possible.

**The new Middletown High School**, the largest building project in that city's history, now leads the state in terms of energy efficiency and technology. Two state grants totaling more than \$1.7 million financed most of a new fuel cell power plant, through which the school generates 20% of its electricity needs on-site, and provides all the school's hot water as a byproduct.

**In Cheshire** the Kids in Motion Boundless Playground was completed this year with state assistance of \$100,000 so all children in town regardless of ability or disability would have ready access to that recreational outlet in Bartlem Park. The state also provided a grant for improvements to the Cheshire High School football field.

**Middlefield's** Peckham Park will be more inviting as a result of a state grant of more than \$200,000. Town officials said the funds will be used to upgrade the park's fitness and workout stations, expand the playscape, and install plastic climbing boulders. In addition, a picnic area will be improved and new fencing and trees will buffer it and some new playing fields from nearby houses.



Dear Neighbor:

By almost any measure, the nation is in a recession, and states across America are feeling the effects.

Connecticut faces these uncertain times with a biennial budget that makes important investments in local schools, roads, health care, school readiness, municipal aid, criminal justice programs, and other vital needs.

However, state revenue forecasts continue to drop, and just as Connecticut's families are tightening their belts, so must our state government. While we held the line on any new spending during this past legislative session, we were still able to find ways to help the people of our state by enacting long-needed reforms in our criminal justice system, health care, consumer protection, and the environment.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Thomas Gaffey*  
Thomas Gaffey  
State Senator

### Fighting the High Cost of Gasoline & Energy



We all know that the cost of fuel is sky-high—affecting how much you pay for gas and groceries. While we can't stop fuel prices from rising, we can prevent tax

increases from further driving up the cost. During the June special session I voted to keep gas prices in check and helped repeal a tax increase that had been scheduled for July 1; my position is consistent with votes I made to lower the state gas tax—in 1997, 1998, and 2000—from 39 cents to 25 cents per gallon, where it stands today. I am also a strong proponent of renewed highway tolls to capture revenue from interstate travelers, the same way our neighboring states generate hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

## State Senator Thomas Gaffey

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I'm proud to represent the  
13th Senate District:  
**Cheshire**  
**Meriden**  
**Middletown**  
**Middlefield**  
**Rockfall**

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State Senator  
**THOMAS GAFFEY**  
13TH DISTRICT

# LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

## Criminal Justice Reforms

Crime is an issue that has been on the minds of many state residents for several months, and the General Assembly took strong and decisive action this year on a variety of criminal justice matters. The legislature created the new crime of “home invasion,” which carries a mandatory 10-year minimum jail term, and created a full-time, professional Board of Pardons and Parole. We also approved doubling and tripling prison sentences for the most violent of criminals while simultaneously giving criminal justice professionals the \$10 million needed to enhance public safety. That money will be used to prosecute repeat offenders, track sexual offenders, hire more investigators and probation officers, and increase funding for prisoner re-entry programs.



## Protecting Homeowners and Our Economy

This year, I supported legislation to help keep families in their homes and protect our local economy from the subprime mortgage crisis. The Homeowner’s Equity Recovery Opportunity loan program now allows the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to purchase home loans from lenders and place eligible borrowers on affordable payment schedules for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. We also created a foreclosure mediation program and placed new restrictions and license requirements on mortgage brokers and lenders.



## Allowing Seniors to Receive Care at Home

Many seniors who require long-term care would prefer to receive that care in their own home or with a relative caregiver. For many, that is not an option due to Medicaid reimbursement rules. A federal program called ‘Money Follows the Person’ allows Medicaid funds to ‘follow the patient’ from nursing homes to more personalized settings. The state program can currently enroll 700 seniors, but we expanded the program to accommodate up to 5,000. Most seniors prefer home care when complete independence is no longer possible, and this federal/state partnership grants that wish while shoring up the state’s finances.

## Veterans’ Benefits

The General Assembly approved a bill to enhance unemployment benefits for spouses if they voluntarily leave their jobs because their military spouse has been relocated. Legislation was also approved to provide additional educational opportunities for certain veterans and their families. One measure requires the state-run institutions of higher education to offer tuition waivers for any state resident who is a dependent or surviving spouse of an active-duty military member who was killed in action after September 11, 2001. In addition, the tuition waiver for veterans will be expanded to include graduate school tuition for National Guard members beginning July 1, 2008.



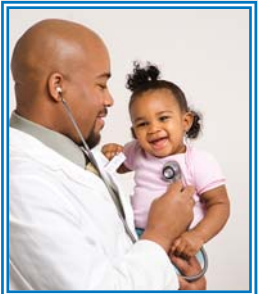
## Autism Legislation

Despite autism being the fastest-growing developmental disability in the United States, there is still not enough support for those who are affected by it. This legislative session I helped to pass a series of bills that will improve the quality of life for autistic children and give their caregivers more support. One new law requires education officials to develop a statewide plan to incorporate methods of teaching children with autism into programs, requirements, and training. Another requires health insurance companies to cover therapy services for those with autism and provides support for people and their families who may not be eligible for state services.



## Lowering Health Care Costs for Municipalities and Small Businesses

This legislative session we tried to tackle one of the biggest issues driving up our property taxes—health care costs for our cities and towns. The Connecticut Healthcare Partnership would allow municipalities, small businesses and nonprofits to voluntarily join the state employee health insurance plan. By expanding this large pool of insured, we would increase bargaining power and lower costs for municipalities. Not only would this benefit property tax payers, but it would also benefit small businesses. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed this important bill.



## Tougher Requirements, Education for Teen Drivers

Communities across the state are grieving over the loss of young lives in tragic automobile accidents. We made several changes this year to help prevent fatal accidents involving teenage drivers and passengers. Teens are now required to spend more time behind the wheel before they can get a driver’s license, and they cannot drive with passengers under age 18 who are not immediate family for a year. While we cannot prevent every accident, if we can save just one family from tragedy, these new laws will be a success.

## Raising the Minimum Wage

During these tough economic times we took positive action to help working families across Connecticut. The General Assembly passed legislation to increase the state minimum hourly wage from \$7.65 to \$8.00 beginning January 1, 2009 and to \$8.25 beginning January 1, 2010. This increase will benefit nearly 65,000 low-income workers in our state and provide them with some financial relief from the rising cost of living. While the governor vetoed this bill, the legislature successfully overrode her veto on June 23.



### MALONEY’S STATE CHAMPS

Connecticut Class I Boys Basketball 2008 champions, the Maloney High School Spartans from Meriden, were honored in April at the State Capitol in Hartford in both the Senate Chamber and the Hall of the House (shown here). With them to celebrate their victory are members of the Meriden legislative delegation, including myself, House Majority Leader Chris Donovan, Representative Cathy Abercrombie and Representative Emil “Buddy” Altobello.